

Message Text

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O R 292059Z NOV 74

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3951

INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ASUNCION 4932/1

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PA

SUBJECT: PARAGUAYAN TERRORIST GROUP CAPTURED

REF: ASUNCION 4899

SUMMARY: GOP UNCOVERED APPARENTLY GENUINE TERRORIST PLOT TO ASSASSINATE PRESIDENT STROESSNER AND KEY TOP MILITARY AND CIVILIAN MEMBERS OF HIS GOVERNMENT, AND KIDNAP WEALTHY LOCAL CITIZENS (NO FOREIGN TARGETS) WHO WERE TO BE HELD IN RECENTLY BUILT SUBTERRANEAN QTE PEOPLES PRISON UNQTE OUTSIDE ASUNCION. SIX-MAN CELL SMASHED NOV. 24-25; TNT-PACKED VEHICLE AND QUANTITIES OF ARMS AND EXPLOSIVES SEIZED. ONE PLOTTER KILLED TRYING TO ESCAPE. TERRORISTS ARE RADICAL MARXISTS FINANCED BY DISSIDENT MOPOCO FACTION ARGENTINA. HAVE SOME LINKED TO ERP. NONE HAD PREVIOUS RECORDS. UNKNOWN NUMBERS OF SUSPECTS ARRESTED; NO EVIDENCE TO DATE OF ADDITIONAL CELLS. GOP UNDECIDED AS OF NOVEMBER 29 HOW TO HANDLE CASE PUBLICLY; PRESS AWARE BUT AWAITING PERMISSION TO PRINT STORY. END SUMMARY.

1. HIGH LEVEL GOP OFFICIALS HAVE PROVIDED AMBASSADOR AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS WITH FULL DETAILS OF TERRORIST PLOT TO KILL PRESIDENT STROESSNER. THEY CHARACTERIZE PLOT AS MOST SERIOUS SINCE STROESSNER TOOK OFFICE. EXCEPT FOR MANNER IN WHICH PLOT WAS BETRAYED, THOSE INVOLVED ARE SAID TO HAVE ACTED WITH CONSIDERABLE PROFESSIONAL SKILL AND DISCIPLINE. OFFICIAL
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VERSION (DETAILS OF WHICH DIFFER IN SOME RESPECTS FROM

FRAGMENTARY INFORMATION PROVIDED REFTEL) FOLLOWS:

A. CELL COMPOSED OF FIVE YOUNG MEN AND ONE WOMAN HAD BEEN OPERATING HERE FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. COMMON DENOMINATOR: ALL ARE CONVINCED QTE MARXISTS UNQTE - SEVERAL OF THEM HAVING BEEN POLITICIZED WHILE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF LA PLATA IN ARGENTINA (ONE WAS MEDICAL STUDENT; ANOTHER ELECTRICAL ENGINEER). CELL'S LEADER TOOK ORDERS FROM HEAD OF ANTI-MENDES FLEITAS OFFSHOOT OF EXILED COLORADO PARTY SPLINTER GROUP MOPOCO, DR. AGUSTIN GOIBURU (RESIDES IN POSADAS, ARGENTINA), WHO PROVIDED US \$60,000 TO FINANCE OPERATION. UNKNOWN WHETHER THIS CELL WAS WORKING ALONE, OR PART OF LARGER NETWORK. CELL LEADER RECEIVED SOME SUPPORT FROM ERP, ARGENTINE TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.

B. PLAN OF OPERATION: THREE STEP PROCESS.

(1) TNT-LOADED VEHICLE WAS TO BE DETONATED BY REMOTE CONTROL ALONG ROUTE FREQUENTLY USED BY STROESSNER, TO TAKE PLACE AFTER JANUARY 10, 1975 (NOT DECEMBER 8, AS REPORTED REFTEL). EARLIER ATTEMPT(S) HAD FAILED WHEN DETONATOR MALFUNCTIONED. (2) FOLLOWING DEATH OF STROESSNER, CONSPIRATORS USING STOLEN MILITARY UNIFORMS WERE TO ATTEMPT INDIVIDUAL ASSASSINATIONS OF KEY MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS - E.G., COMMANDERS OF MAJOR UNITS, FONMIN SAPENA PASTOR, INTMIN. MONTANARO. CELL HAD PREPARED DETAILED PLANS OF RESIDENCES OF THESE OFFICIALS, THEIR MISTRESSES' HOMES, ETC., WHERE OFFICIALS LIKELY TO BE, PLUS EXTENSIVE OTHER PERSONAL DATA (SOME CURRENT, SOME OUT OF DATA). (3) TO FINANCE FURTHER DEPREDATIONS, CELLS WOULD THEN KIDNAP LOCAL WEALTHY CITIZENS. LIST INCLUDED NAMES OF PROMINENT IMPORTERS AND SEVERAL RICH RANCHERS. GROUP ALSO INTENDED INTER ALIA TO ASSAULT ASUNCION'S LARGEST MONEY EXCHANGE HOUSE. (NOTE: ACCORDING TO CAPTURED PLANS AND RESULTS OF THOROUGH AND PROLONGED QUESTIONING, POLICE ARE SATISFIED THAT NO FOREIGNERS (INCLUDING OFFICIALS) WERE TARGETS. THE CELL WAS ONLY INTERESTED IN PARAGUAYANS.)

C. PARTICIPANTS: NONE HAD PREVIOUS RECORDS; SEVERAL ARE RELATED TO POLICE OR MID-LEVEL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES. OTHERWISE, THEY ARE "ANONYMOUS" PEOPLE.
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(1) LEADER WAS CARLOS RAMIRES BLANCO AKA ANGEL RAMIREZ GONZALEZ AKA TATO, 35, SINGLE, CONFESSED MARXIST BUT NOMINAL MEMBER OF RULING COLORADO PARTY. OTHERS: (2) AMILCAR MARIA OVIEDO DUARTE AKA FLACO-ONE OR BOCHO, 21, SINGLE, TOPOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT, ONE-TIME MEDICAL STUDENT IN LA PLATA, CONFESSED MARXIST. (3) CARLOS MANCUELLO AKA FLACO-TWO, 23, MARRIED, ENROLLED AS FOURTH YEAR ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

STUDENT AT LA PLATA, CONFESSED MARXIST. (4) BENJAMIN DE JESUS RAMIERS VILLALBA AKA NEGRO OR RENGO, 34, SINGLE, STREET VENDOR, APOLITICAL; AND (5) HIS MISTRESS MARIA MAGDALENA GALEANO ROTELA, 22, SINGLE, AVOWED MARXIST. (6) GERVASIO BENITEZ ARMOA AKA EL NEGRO, SINGLE, KILLED WHILE TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM POLICE ON NOVEMBER 24, MARXIST. POLICE HAVE ROUNDED UP UNKNOWN NUMBER OF OTHERS WHO HAD PREVIOUS RECORDS. AS OF NOVEMBER 28, NINE WERE STILL IN CUSTODY.

D. DISCOVERY OF PLOT. GOP WAS EXTREMELY LUCKY, BENEFITTING FROM PRESUMED STUPIDITY OF BENITEZ. HE HAD SOUGHT LAST WEEK TO PURCHASE A LARGE QUANTITY OF TNT FROM NAVY ACQUAINTANCE, SAYING HIS PURPOSE WAS TO SELL IT TO THE EXTREME RIGHTIST ARGENTINE TERRORIST GROUP AAA. NAVY CONTACT INFORMED STROESSNER'S NAVAL AIDE WHO INFORMED POLICE. BENITEZ WAS TRAPPED AND AFTER TEN HOURS INTERROGATION LED POLICE TO FLACO-ONE ON NOVEMBER 24. BENITEZ WAS KILLED TRYING TO ESCAPE (OR PERHAPS INTENDING TO COMMIT SUICIDE, ACCORDING TO SEVERAL SOURCES). FLACO-ONE WAS CAPTURED EARLY NOVEMBER 25, ALSO TRIED TO COMMIT SUICIDE BUT WAS FOILED BY POLICE ESCORT. HE TOOK POLICE TO FLACO-TWO, AN ELECTRONICS EXPERT WHO HAD BUILT DETONATOR USING REMOTE CONTROL TRANSISTOR RADIO AS TRANSMITTING DEVICE. FLACO-TWO IN TURN LED POLICE TO RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED HOUSE ON OUTSKIRTS OF CITY, INTO WHICH THERE HAD BEEN BUILT A SPECIAL SUBTERRANEAN QTE PEOPLES PRISON UNQTE, TO KEEP UP TO SIX KIDNAP VICTIMS.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ASUNCION 4932/2

EXDIS

AT THIS HOUSE POLICE FOUND A VEHICLE PACKED WITH TNT, SEIZED A LARGE QUANTITY OF EXPLOSIVES, GRENADES, REVOLUTIONARY PROPAGANDA, AND ARRESTED MAGDA AND RENGO (CONSIDERED RELATIVELY UNIMPORTANT). SYSTEM TO WARN TATO IF SUBORDINATES GOT CAUGHT UNACCOUNTABLY BROKE DOWN, OR TATO WAS CARELESS. IN ANY EVENT HE WALKED INTO ARMS OF POLICE ON AFTERNOON NOVEMBER 25.

E. GOP ASSESSMENT OF PLOT. THIS IS CONSIDERED THE MOST SERIOUS PLOT SINCE STROESSNER TOOK OFFICE, AND NOTEWORTHY FOR PROFESSIONALISM OF PARTICIPANTS. GOP IS VERY WORRIED BECAUSE OF SEVERAL INTERRELATED FACTORS: FIRST, GOIBURU'S SPONSORSHIP IS PUZZLING, AS IS INFORMATION HE HAS PUT UP AT LEAST US \$60,000 TO FINANCE CELL. BASED ON LENGTHY INTERROGATION GOP HAS RELUCTANTLY DISCARDED HOPES THAT MENDES FLEITAS FACTION OF MOPOCO WAS BEHIND THE PLOT. SECOND, ERP'S SUPPORT TO CELL IS DISTURBING BECAUSE OF KNOWN COMPETENCE OF ERP AS TERRORIST ORGANIZATION. GOP IS IN TOUCH WITH GOA IN SEEKING MORE INFORMATION ON THOS ARRESTED AND THEIR ARGENTINE CONTACTS AT LA PLATA. THIRD, FANATICISM AND DISCIPLINE OF TOTALLY ANONYMOUS CELL MEMBERS (TWO ATTEMPTED QTE SUICIDES UNQTE) IS DISQUIETING, AS IS GOP'S NAGGING SUSPICION THAT MORE CELLS MAY STILL EXIST (MEANING POSSIBLY THAT INTERROGATION OF CELL MEMBERS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN TOTALLY SUCCESSFUL TO DATE. MILITARY SOURCE SPECUALTED TO DATT THAT ORGANIZATION MAY CONFIDENTIAL

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NUMBER OVER 300 AND SPECULATED IT MIGHT SURFACE AS QTE EJERCITO PARAGUAYO REVOLUCIONARIO - EPR UNQTE DURING MEETING OF FOURTH INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN ARGENTINA NEXT JANUARY.) FOURTH, GOP DOES NOT KNOW WHETHER TO CREDIT CELL'S CLAIM THAT EARLIER EFFORTS TO DETONATE VEHICLE FAILED. FIFTH, GOP IS SURPRISED BY DETAILED KNOWLEDGE (WITH SOME NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS) ON PART OF CONSPIRATORS ABOUT HIGH-PLACED PARAGUAYAN OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THEIR PRIVATE LIVES. SIXTH, AS NOTED ABOVE, GOP UNCOVERED PLOT THANKS TO GOOD LUCK ALONE, AND NOT BECAUSE OF ANY SKILL BY SECURITY FORCES.

F. WHERE TO GO FROM HERE. GOP IS UNDECEIDED HOW TO HANDLE PRISONERS. POLICE AND STROESSNER'S ELDEST SON ARE SAID TO FAVOR EXECUTION; OTHERS SENSE THIS MIGHT DAMAGE PARAGUAY'S IMAGE (QTE PARAGUAY IS NOT ETHIOPIA UNQTE). DECISION WILL HAVE TO BE MADE BY STROESSNER HIMSELF. GOP IS ALSO STRUGGLING WITH HOW TO BREAK STORY OF UNCOVERING THE PLOT WITHOUT LOOKING STUPID, SOFT, OR (AS WAS THE CASE) SIMPLY LUCKY. NEWS-

PAPER REPORTS HAVE APPEARED IN ARGENTINE PRESS AND VIRTUALLY EVERYONE IN ASUNCION KNOWS MORE OR LESS THE ENTIRE STORY. PRESS CONFERENCE CALLED BY GOP FOR THAT PURPOSE EVENING OF NOVEMBER 29.

2. COMMENT: DETAILS WERE GIVEN TO AMBASSADOR BY TWO MINISTERS INDEPENDENTLY AND THEN CORROBORATED BY A HIGH OFFICIAL OF INTERIOR MINISTRY. IT IS OF COURSE DIFFICULT TO GAUGE PRECISELY HOW FACTUAL THE FOREGOING MAY BE, ALTHOUGH WE ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT AS GENUINE FACT OF PLOT AND BASIC OUTLINES PROVIDED TO US BY SOME THOROUGHLY RELIABLE SOURCES. IT SEEMS LIKELY MANNER IN WHICH PLOT WAS UNCOVERED HAS NOT BEEN FULLY REVEALED, BUT LAMENT TO US THAT GOP WAS EXTREMELY QTE LUCKY UNQTE RINGS TRUE, AS DOES REPORTED DISPUTE OVER WHAT THE FATE OF THE PLOTTERS SHOULD BE. ALREADY THERE ARE SIGNS CERTAIN ELEMENTS MAY WISH TO EXPLOIT STORY FOR THEIR OWN PARODHIAL PURPOSES: DATT HAS BEEN APPROACHED BY HIGH LEVEL MILITARY CONTACTS WHO PREFACED REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE FROM US (E.G., VEHICLE RADIO EQUIPMENT, ANTI-EXPLOSIVE GEAR) WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSERTION THAT KIDNAP LISTS FOUND WITH PLOTTERS INCLUDED NAMES OF US AMBASSADOR, EMBASSY ADMIN OFFICER, DATT HIMSELF, AND UNAMED US BUSINESSMAN. WE CONSIDER THIS PURE FABRICATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING FM RADIO NET FOR THE ARMED FORCES. ONLY OTHER ALLEGED INDIRECT INVOLVEMENT OF US IS REPORT THAT TNT FOUND AT QTE PRISON UNQTE BORE MARKINGS QTE US ARMY UNQTE, ALLEGEDLY PROCURED BY PARAGUAYAN TERRORISTS FROM ERP WHICH HAD STOLEN IT FROM ARGENTINE ARMY. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER PRESENCE OF FIRST GENUINE TERRORIST GROUP HERE WILL LEAD TO MORE SERIOUS ATTITUDE ON PART OF GOP TOWARDS INTERNAL SECURITY (UP TO NOW, ALMOST NONEXISTENT). WE CONSIDER IT HEALTHY SIGN GOP SAYS IT IS COLLABORATING CLOSELY WITH ARGENTINE SECURITY TO CLEAR UP CURRENT CASE.
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